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Housing Policy For Dublin

Sinn Fein The Workers Party

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*Coalition Press Conference
in Dail 9/6/77
(Minister - Ryan)*

HOUSING POLICY FOR DUBLIN.

Since the National Coalition Government took office, approximately 34,000 new dwellings have been provided in Dublin. Of these, approximately 9,000 have been new local authority dwellings provided under the revised differential rent scheme.

This major housing drive, both in the public and private sectors, has reduced considerably the worst features of the housing backlog we inherited. In addition, the quality of local authority housing has been dramatically improved by deliberate action of this Government.

We have not built sub-standard dwellings for local authority tenants as happened under previous administrations. Nor have we built any high-rise developments for prestige or political purposes. We have sought to ensure that all local authority tenants are housed in good quality accommodation, at rents they can afford. The elimination of rates by 1979 will further reduce the weekly housing outlay of all urban dwellers, including local authority tenants.

The National Coalition intends to continue this drive to provide adequate accommodation for all those in Dublin who need it. During the next four years, a minimum of 40,000 new dwellings will be completed in Dublin. The land is available and the finance will be available within the context of the Government's National Housing Programme as outlined in our "Programme for Progress".

By continuing the housing programme at this level in Dublin, we will be able to meet the new housing needs of the future.

New houses alone will not solve Dublin's future accommodation requirements. Nor should it be expected to do so. A large pool of private rental accommodation will continue to be needed to meet the needs of many people in Dublin, particularly single and young people.

In keeping with most modern expanding cities the number of persons living in rented accommodation in Dublin is increasing each year. This expansion has occurred without any overall framework to ensure that adequate standards are met, that property is reasonably maintained, and that conversions occur in a matter compatible with local neighbourhood structures. While the new Planning Appeals Board should ensure that future development is in accordance with the needs of good community planning, the National Coalition feels that it is important that the Government should play a part in ensuring that rented accommodation is available on fair terms and at reasonable quality.

Accordingly it is proposed to introduce legislation to ensure that all landlords are registered with a special Authority established to promote the orderly development and improvement of rented dwellings. Landlords who fail to register will automatically find that their tenants become statutory tenants with a right to permanent tenure at a fixed rent. In this way a high degree of compliance by landlords is assured. A condition of registration will be the provision of a rent book to each tenant, the provisions of receipts in respect of rent paid, and the maintenance of the property in good order and in compliance with health and

when x

building regulations.

On the tenants' part, the new charter will oblige the tenant to give reasonable notice of intention to leave. Tenants may request that the newly formed Authority examine the premises to ensure that it meets the necessary standards for rented accommodation. In the event of a flat failing to meet registration standards, the landlord will be obliged to put the property in good repair or cease to offer it for rent.

This 'Flatdwellers Charter' will pose no threats to good landlords who maintain their property. It will encourage the provision of more unfurnished rented accommodation, the demand for which is growing and it will regularise the relationship between landlord and tenant. Equally important, it will ensure that landlords will have their properties in good order and so help to reduce the general blight in city areas where landlord neglect has led to a run down in properties.

The answer to meeting Dublin's future housing needs will require not only more new houses and the regulation of private rental accommodation, but a positive policy to prevent the absolution and decay of old housing stock. A new Housing Rehabilitation Programme will be introduced aimed at prolonging the life of old dwellings. This will have the effect, not only of maintaining a high housing stock, but of retaining and consolidating existing communities, especially in the inner city. A minimum of £1½ million will be devoted to this purpose in Dublin. *at annually when x*

The National Coalition Government, however, is not only concerned to provide sufficient accommodation for Dublin in the future. It is

also deeply concerned with the environment within which people live.

For this reason, and as part of a programme to improve Dublin's housing environment, two things will be done.

New minimum standards for all new housing areas in relation to amenity-provision, community facilities, facilities for young people and children will be enforced. The objective will be to provide total housing environments designed to meet not only the housing needs of people in Dublin, but also their community and communal needs.

It will also be ensured that derelict buildings and vacant sites can be acquired by local authorities with minimum delay, if these are not utilised for a period of 12 months. To this end, existing compulsory purchase powers will be amended. In this way, some of the more glaring eyesores which spoil our housing environment will be removed.